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ABSTRACT

As one in a series of eight articles written by different professionals concerned with Alaska Native land claims, this article focuses on the isolated rural village and its problems in understanding and acting upon the provisions of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1972. Designed to stimulate careful political/historical reading and discussion, this booklet presents 13 open-ended questions for group discussion. Major issues covered in the text of this article include: (1) the economically disadvantaged aspects of village life; (2) cultural differences; (3) educational problems (emphasis on the poor quality of Bureau of Indian Affairs schools and the tremendous cultural adjustment necessary for those students who must attend high school away from home; (4) transportation problems (emphasis on the fact that Natives are generally unaware of the monies available to them for improvements); (5) the sanitation and health problems of rural villages; (6) rural population and leadership losses; (7) the lack of police and/or emergency protection; (8) lack of village communication with legislative processes and the need for village leadership to interpret Native rights; (9) an assessment of past legislation which should have benefited the Native villager but did not; and (10) a plea for rural Native interest in and comprehension of the Settlement Act. (JC)

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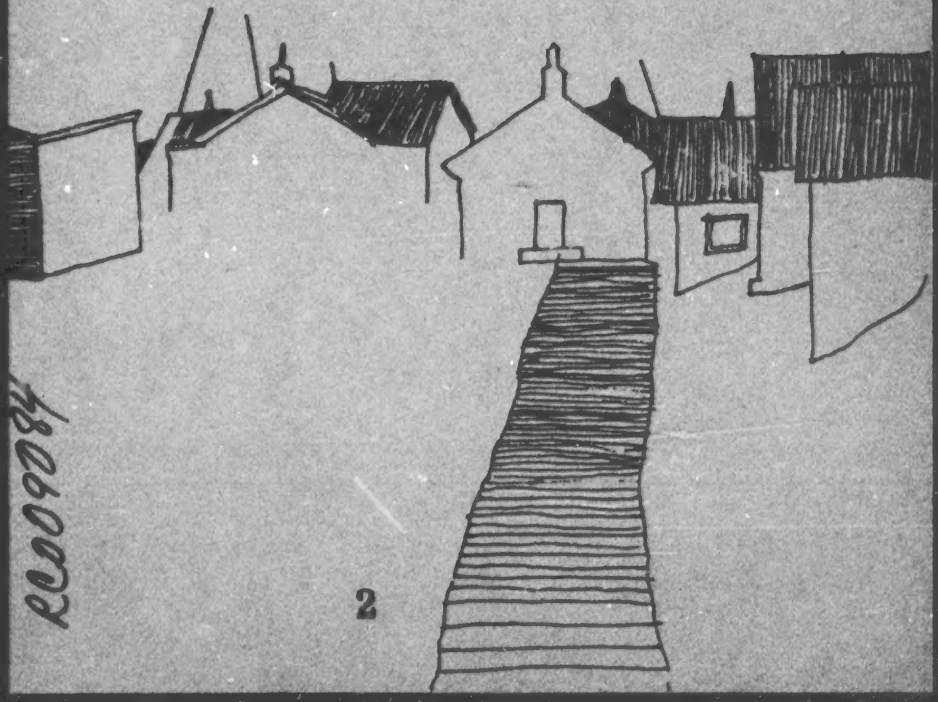
One of a Series of Articles on

THE NATIVE LAND CLAIMS



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READER

VILLAGE ALASKA

By

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One of a Series of Articles on

THE NATIVE LAND CLAIMS

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TO THE READER

This booklet is one of a collection of articles written by people who are interested in Native land claims. As you will see, all of the people do not agree. They present their ideas for you to read and discuss. You may be excited about some of their ideas because you think they are absolutely right, or very wrong. When you have finished reading the articles, you will probably have done a lot of thinking about Native land claims and Alaskan politics.

Politics is not an easy field to understand. And yet politics is what the Native land claims are all about. Most of the articles were written by people who have spent a lot of time working in the world of politics. These people have a whole vocabulary which most students have not yet learned. So, to help students understand the reading, there is at the beginning of each article a list of definitions of terms. Any words in *italics* are explained for you at the beginning of that article, or an earlier one.

At the end of some articles are questions which you can ask yourself. In the margin, next to the question are numbers. If you go back to paragraphs in the article with the same numbers, and reread, you can increase your understanding. We cannot say you will always have definite answers but you may form your point of view.

ARTICLES AND AUTHORS

Stock, Corporations, and the Native Land Claims Settlement	Stephen Conn Associate Professor of Law ISEGR, University of Alaska
Environmental Issues in the Land Claims	Guy Martin Alaska Legislative Aide to the Late Congressman, Nick Begich
New Tribes for New Times	Guy Martin Alaska Legislative Aide to the Late Congressman, Nick Begich
The Politics of Passage	Guy Martin Alaska Legislative Aide to the Late Congressman, Nick Begich
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VILLAGE ALASKA

In talking about village Alaska, it is important to define the areas being discussed. Geographically, village Alaska is found in Southeast Alaska, the North Slope, Norton Sound, the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, the Aleutian Chain, and the areas surrounding the Yukon River and its tributaries. What makes the villages different from the other areas of Alaska are their population, economy, culture, and history.

The population of village Alaska is very sparse. A village may have anywhere from 25 people to 3,000. (In speaking of village Alaska, larger communities such as Kotzebue and Bethel are included.) As time goes on, the number of people living in the smaller villages is quickly decreasing due to the movement of people to larger communities like Anchorage and Fairbanks, Kotzebue, and Bethel. The reasons for this movement of population will be discussed later.

The economy is one of money, barter, and subsistence hunting. When there is a lack of any of the three mentioned, welfare makes up the difference.

Money is hard to come by in any village, for several reasons. The most obvious reason is the lack of employment opportunities in a village. In many villages the only people employed year round are the postmaster, the village store manager, the school janitor, several teacher's aides, and the health aides. The rest of the community has to rely on summer employment such as fishing, fire-fighting, and construction work to fulfill their needs for the rest of the year. This seasonal employment is not adequate to carry a family throughout the year.

Subsistence hunting is still a very important factor in the economy of village Alaska. It has already been said that money does not carry a family over the whole year, so hunting for food and furs for clothing makes up some of the distance. In fact, the main diet of any family is composed of fish or game. For the Eskimo along the Bering Sea, sea mammals such as seals and whales, along with fish, provide the main diet. For the Athabascan Indian in the Yukon Flats, moose, beaver, salmon, and wild berries are used. But more and more, the Native people living in villages are becoming dependent on store-bought food and clothing. And this is where welfare comes in.

There is first of all the type of welfare which is given as direct money to the family in need. Both the BIA and the state provide this. There is also the Food Stamp Program which makes it possible for a family with very little money to buy more with their money by buying stamps issued by the Department of Agriculture. There is a positive effect of such programs and a negative as well. This will be discussed further.

Culturally, village Alaska is composed of Eskimos, Aleuts and Indians (Tlingits, Haidas, Athapascans and Tsimshians), while the larger communities like Anchorage and Fairbanks are composed mostly of immigrants from the lower forty-eight. The Native culture is at this point near extinction, although potlatches and dances are still held. Anthropologists term this "enculturation." There are problems that derive from enculturation of the Native people and this will be discussed further.

Aside from these problems, there are other differences which exist between village Alaska and urban Alaska. One of the main differences is in education. Village Alaska has hardly any educational facilities such as gymnasiums, theaters, high schools, etc., that are found in the larger communities. Also in village Alaska there are three systems of education while the other areas have a more uniform system. In the villages there are BIA schools, state schools and private schools with their own systems of education.

Transportation is one of the biggest differences between urban and village Alaska. There is usually only one way a a person can go in and out of a village to other communities, if not by snow-go in winter or a boat in the summer, and that is by air. Air travel, as everyone recognizes, is expensive, especially to the villages. Village Alaska is dependent on air service to bring in needed supplies year round, and fares and freight costs keep rising. As for the urban areas of Alaska, they are connected by highways and railways, and are also serviced by several airlines.

Health is another area where village Alaska differs from the urban areas. In the villages there are no doctors, dentists, and nurses. When people are ill they have to go to Bethel, Kotzebue, Anchorage, or Tanana to get treatment. Village Alaska has what we call health aides. Their job is to rely messages to the doctors through radio. Hospitals are non-existent in the villages. There are

Public Health Service clinics where the villages can get treatment for small cuts and headaches. But in cases of emergency, weather permitting, they have to fly to the nearest hospital. The urban areas of Alaska, however, boast hospitals, and in the absence of hospitals, doctors, nurses, dentists, and even veterinarians for their pets.

Another area of difference between village Alaska and urban Alaska is their representation in Juneau through their legislators. Village Alaska, due to its small population, does not have much of a representation in Juneau while the urban areas, again due to their numbers, have a heavy delegation in Juneau. We all know that majority rules. There are problems inherent in this as well.

All in all, the differences between village Alaska and the urban areas of Alaska are many. Economically and politically, in education, health, and in culture, problems plague village Alaska. It is these problems we will discuss now.

Some problems are created by the geographical isolation of villages, such as transportation and communication, but some problems are problems that need not exist at this time in the history of man. One of the most pressing problems faced by village Alaskans is in the field of education. It is true that there is a lot of work being done in this area, but the problem still persists.

One inherent problem from the territorial days in education is the three systems of education found in the villages: the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the state of Alaska, and the private schools such as St. Mary's Covenant High School, and the now closed Copper Valley School. The existence of the three systems does not make the problem; it is rather the lack of uniformity between the three that creates it. There would be no problem if the three systems had basically the same curriculum. The problem is mainly in what is taught in these schools. Let me illustrate:

Johnny Yupik is an Eskimo boy in village Alaska. He attends the BIA school in his village. He started attending the school when he was six years old. He learned the English language but before he was old enough to go to school, the only language that he spoke was Eskimo. He has already learned his ABC's and he has learned to speak and read in English. He now knows who Dick and Jane are, but he doesn't know what a farm is or an automobile and all those other things that they discuss daily in school. However he knows what they are talking about. Years fly by and Johnny is now in the 8th grade.

He knows what everyone in his class knows, and next year he will be going on to high school at Anchorage through the State Boarding Home Program.

So Johnny graduates and goes on to Anchorage to attend high school. He is all excited about the whole thing. The only thing that spoils all the excitement is that when he gets to Anchorage, Johnny is homesick. His mother writes to Johnny often and also wishes that he would be home, too. Johnny is having some problems with the people he is staying with while in Anchorage. First of all, they aren't his parents, and they treat him like an alien from Mars, although they don't mean to. They are so different from his own family, They eat different food, they do everything differently from at home. He wishes that was the only problem that he had; this homesickness and wanting to be with his parents.

His biggest problem is in school. Although Johnny graduated from the 8th grade like all the 9th graders from Anchorage, Johnny just dosen't know everything that the kids in his class know. He isn't doing too well in his classes. He is receiving D's and C's (if he is lucky). What can he do? If only he were home, then he wouldn't be having all these problems. He knows that his mother wants him with her, and he is thinking a lot now of how good it was at home. So Johnny decides to go home to help his patents.

How many Johnny Yupiks are there in village Alaska? Why don't the students from the villages graduate from their villages and complete high school at home, or near home, and not have to go to Anchorage?

Children leaving home to attend schools creates unnecessary stress on the part of the child who needs to mature with his parents. It also creates problems at home when the mother has to live without her son or daughter. An eighth grade graduate from a village should be able to go on to any school and know what his classmates know. And why should the student leave home in the first place? Why don't they build a high school in his village? Why doesn't he know what his classmates from Anchorage know?

Although it is highly desirable to build and maintain schools in every village in Alaska there are several reasons why it is almost impossible. First of all is it feasible to build a high school in a village of say 200 with 20 high school students? Money, or the lack of it, rules it out. Money would have to be spent in the equipment for the school, and money would be needed to pay the

teachers in the school. There just isn't money to build high schools in every village. The state doesn't have that kind of money.

As for the question of why an eighth grade graduate from village Alaska could not easily go into a high school in Anchorage or Fairbanks, the answer is simple. The village student is behind when he gets into a school out of the BIA system of education. This can be attributed to lack of uniformity in education in Alaska.

As I have mentioned there are three systems of education in Alaska, the BIA, the state, and the private schools. All of these have their own curricula. They go their own speed in instruction, and in one, a student will end up way ahead, but if he attends another, he may be far behind. There is a gap between the three systems that the student has to close himself when transferring. This might be the reason why so many youngsters from the villages attending the state and public schools are dropping out, and if they aren't dropping, out, are far behind.

All in all, the chances of a student from village Alaska succeeding in his quest of higher education are very slim due to all the handicaps that he starts out with, namely bridging gaps between the educational systems, having to live away from home at a time when he needs his parents, and having to adjust to another culture and way of life.

Health, or the lack of it, is another problem faced by the village Alaskans. There are several reasons why this exists.

One is unsanitary conditions within the village. There are no sewage systems, so outhouses, and in their absence, nothing, are used. In many villages, dumps are not found and the people discard whatever refuse they may have around the village itself. It is not surprising that when spring thaw comes, the villagers have to suffer through epidemics of diarrhea, flu, and other diseases that very few people suffer in the world today.

There is no system of running water to supply the villagers with their drinking and washing supply. Water is usually acquired from lakes surrounding the village. Since the villages have no dumps, the water that they use is in many cases contaminated. It is also rare for a family to wash their clothes

frequently due to this shortage of water. A family does not bathe as frequently as they would if they had water. In this day and age, it is indeed saddening to see people living with so little of the most basic thing - water.

Another factor that contributes to sicknesses in the villages is the location of the villages themselves. Most villages are located in areas that are marshy, in low terrains. Annual floods are not new to the inhabitants. And when a flood strikes, it usually drives the vermin into the village along with the trash and refuse discarded by the villagers.

The villagers will have to handle this problem by themselves. By virtue of their isolation, by the location of their villages, they more or less contribute to their own ill health. There is another contributing factor to ill health in the village: the nonavailability of medical facilities. In the Lower Yukon and Kuskokwim region there is one hospital located at Bethel. This hospital is old, unsuitable for operations and child deliveries. It has fifty beds, seven doctors, and it is servicing more than fifteen thousand people in the surrounding area. How can a hospital so old, with a staff so small, service all its people adequately?

When a villager is seriously ill, they have to fly him into Bethel, Kotzebue or Anchorage for treatment. Sometimes this can be the difference between life and death for that person. And the hospital will only authorize "serious" cases to fly in, otherwise the person who wants to see a doctor has to pay his own way in. For a person to fly out of the bush to these hospitals is expensive and people have so little money to spend on plane fares. Had they ready available medical centers, the village Alaskans might be in better health.

Poor health and poor educational systems are not the only problems which plague the village Alaskans. Economic problems also irritate the poor living conditions of the villagers.

In the village of Hooper Bay, the largest along the Bering Coast, south of Nome, this economic problem can be best seen. Hooper Bay has a population of over 500 people. It has a store owned cooperatively by the people. It has a primary and junior high school run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. There are

two churches, and hardly any jobs.

Jobs to be found in Hooper Bay are postmaster, school janitor, store manager, teacher's aide, Wien agent, AVEC power plant attendant, health aide, school teacher, policeman, magistrate, and PHS clinic attendant. All of the positions above, except for the school teachers, are filled by the local people. But of at least 250 people able for work, only ten are employed on a year round basis. What do the other do for money?

Summer jobs are sporadic for the people of Hooper Bay. Men make most of whatever monies they make through fire-fighting. If they are lucky they will have three fires to fight during the summer. Cannery work does not interest them any more due to low pay and long hours. A man may receive $800 for a whole summer's work in a cannery. The few men who still persist with cannery work do so now as fishermen or fishermen's helpers. But because they do not own boats at Bristol Bay, where the great majority of the fisheries are, they make very little.

Closely related to this problem of jobs is the living conditions of these people. Most families live in one room houses. The average number of the family is about seven, counting the parents. Under such crowded conditions any sicknesses contracted by family member can be quickly passed to the whole family. And because the number of family members is so large, in comparison to the income of the family, food and fuel shortages are common. Even after a good summer of fishing or fire-fighting, the family will run out of money before half the year is over due to the high costs of their needed supplies. It is then evident that a family cannot live off their meager savings. Supplemental funds through the welfare programs of the state and the BIA are needed. It is not uncommon to find several families out of food in the winter when they have exhausted their food and money supplies.

It is no wonder that legislators in Juneau believe that money is being drained into the villages just to keep them there. This might be overstating the role of the state government in the village situation, but it is true to a degree.

Another problem faced by village Alaskans is their dwindling population. There are several reasons. First, a young man with a family cannot make a living in the village. If he completed high school he would most likely qualify for a job in Bethel, Kotzebue, or the larger centers all over Alaska. So he leaves the village for work. Secondly, a young person who had gone to school

out of the village in urban areas is not likely to go back to the village to live, having tasted the easier life in the city. Running water, flush toilets, movie theaters, cheaper stores, all creep into the life style of any person. These young people will return to the village occasionally for vacations and hunting trips, but they will not live in a village.

The problem that this relocation of young people creates is a leadership vacuum. Many of these young people, able to read, write, and understand the ways of the white man, do not return to the village where their abilities would have been used. Many of the members of a village council in any village are illiterate, and this is a major handicap in many village councils.

Another problem found in village Alaska is the inability of the governing body, the village council, to effectively meet the needs of their villages. In many villages all over Alaska, the village council is composed of the more elderly in that village. This is a cultural value and is hard to shake off. The problem with this situation is that these older men cannot read or write in English, and when all of their correspondence with the outside world is done in this language, a problem arises. They cannot read whatever information they receive, and they cannot reply to important letters effectively. And yet, they are continually voted into office.

Another factor relating to this ineffectiveness in village councils is that they do not really understand what their functions are. They are also not aware of their powers. Although many of these villages have constitutions, they hardly look at them. The main order of business, in many village council meetings, is the loose-dog problem and the uncontrollable youth problem. What they do not discuss in these meetings are such things as the poor airline service they are getting, their student problems (students coming home from school before the year is over), how best to use their BIA assistance funds, and countless other things that they should be concerned with. As pointed out, this exists mainly because they are not aware of the fact that they can act in such areas. What they think on such subjects is that "somebody outside" is going to take care of their problems in education, transportation, sanitation, etc. They are indeed dependent on someone "outside." They have to realize that unless they speak out about problems, no one is going to act on them one way or another. This is where the younger members of the village community would be valuable.

A closely related problem in village Alaska is the ignorance of the village Alaskans of their rights as citizens of the United States and of the state of Alaska. Many of the villages are now fourth class cities. In recent years there has been this incorporation craze in rural Alaska. When voting for incorporation the people expected a change for the better. They are told that they will have more money, more powers, and they will be eligible for state and federal aid. Not as Natives but as cities. What they do not understand is that they have to apply for aid in order to receive it. They are not even aware that they are eligible for such aid. For instance, in Alaska, fourth class or better cities are eligible for state funds for the upkeep of roads, and other "paths" of transportation. But year after year, village roads, or airports, keep deteriorating while the members of the village community await action from Juneau. Many times candidates for office had promised a new airport, road, or whatever, to the people in the last election. But it is not up to the candidate or the public official to get the road or the airport; the people themselves have to ask and fight for it.

Another illustration of this would also be in disaster funds from both federal and state governments. Year after year, many villages are flooded. They lose a lot of their boats, food, etc., but they never apply for disaster relief funds for which they are eligible. Instead they try, as best they can, to pick up the pieces themselves without any aid. Sometimes a flood may wipe out, or render useless, a whole winter's supply of food. Yet no relief of any kind comes to a village.

Police protection is almost nonexistent in a village community. By police protection, one does not mean merely cops and robbers. It means police aid in such things as drownings, lost hunters, drunken bouts, and such. For instance, in one village, three men were lost and assumed drowned in the fall of 1970. No state police ever made it to the scene of the accident and did not even aid in the search for the victims. The villagers had to do it all themselves with limited means of search and rescue. A plane would have been of great aid to them, but none came. In places like Fairbanks and Anchorage or more populous centers, the state police would have been swarming and investigating the scene of the accident or crime, but not so in village Alaska. One can be assured, however, that there are game wardens closely guarding and protecting the geese and wildlife found in the same locale while the villagers have to protect themselves and have to suffer through disasters and accidents on their own.

Closely related to the economic, health, governmental, and educational ills of village Alaska are the social problems. As mentioned before, acculturation of the Native people to the white culture brings its own problems, such as that of identity on the part of the younger people, whether they are Eskimo, Aleut, Tlingit, Haida, Athapascan, or white. This is not so much an ethnic or racial problem but one of the values tied in with these cultures. Should a young Eskimo listen to his father or should he listen to his schoolmaster? Should he listen to his father or the minister in his village? Is it really wrong to be a Native? Are the values and traditions of the white culture more important than his father's values and tradition? This is indeed a problem faced by many young people today. They are in a sense the last of their own races and whether or not they will remain such is completely left up to them. One might say they are the last of the Mohicans, but instead of being destroyed with guns they might be wiped out by an uncompromising culture.

It is usually said in many cities within Alaska that Natives are drunks. If they think that the Natives are drunks, they may very well be. What we should look at is why they are "drunks."

In village Alaska alcohol is indeed a problem. It leads to the breaking up of families, suicides, murders, and the deterioration of the person using alcohol to excess. Alcoholism was listed in the 1968 "Leading Causes of Hospitalization of Alaska Natives" published by the PHS, as the sixth major cause for Natives being hospitalized. Yet a great many Natives in villages have to suffer the disease on their own. In a community as small as a village, even one drunk will disrupt the peace of the whole community. Why then, do they drink?

Sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists usually say that drinking is an escape mechanism used by persons running from the realities of life. This might partly answer the question of why drinking is such a problem. For to look at the harsh realities these people have to face in their day to day living would drive anyone to drink. Where a way of life is threatened, where a man can no longer adequately support his family, where a man is no longer a man in his own eyes, drinking would come in as a handy tool for escape. Usually the men are the ones who do most of the drinking. Rarely do we find women drinking in a village.

Although drinking to excess is in itself a problem, there are other problems that arise from it. In the case of village Alaska these problems might be more acute than in cities. First of all, the problem starts at home. The man who turns to drink will not do his daily chores. He will not go hunt or go for firewood. He will not pay much attention to his children and wife, and he will take money needed by his family to secure alcohol in whatever form he can get it. His family soon goes cold, hungry, and are left alone without anyone to care for them and guide them. The children are the ones hurt most by this problem within a family. In many cases they turn out to be the "hard cases" later on, due to their family problems. In many cases the Department of Welfare will take the children from a family who does not take care of them, and this is usually due to alcohol. The man finds himself in worse shape than he started out.

Outside of the family, drinking also creates problems in village Alaska. As mentioned, one drunk will disrupt the peace of the whole village, and this is so because everyone knows everybody else. When someone is drunk they usually become very brave, if that word can be used to describe it. They will leave their homes to wander in the village. Children playing will run home and their families will pray that this drunk will not try to visit and hurt them. If there is more than one person drunk, a brawl will usually develop, and everyone knows about it. Holidays in many villages have turned from times of joy to times of fear and horror. Many accidents also occur from drunken bouts. As mentioned, suicides are committed, and even murders, when persons are intoxicated.

Government and Village Alaska

Although government was created for the good of all its citizens, some of its acts do not always serve that purpose. This is especially true of governmental actions, both federal and state, which affect the Alaska Natives without their active input, or consent.

The year 1867 is a memorable year for all Alaskans. It was the year when the United States bought Alaska from the Russians for a mere $7,200 000. The sale of Alaska and all its lands was done without the consent of the Alaskan Eskimos, Indians, and Aleuts. This was merely the beginning of governmental actions taken without the knowledge and consent of the Alaskan Natives. This eventually led to a clash between the Natives and the federal and state

governments, and it is a continuing problem facing the people of Alaska.

In 1884, the Organic Act was passed by Congress. This Act made all mining laws of Oregon applicable to Alaska. But there was an insertion which stated that lands occupied or used by Alaska's "aboriginal people" shall not be disturbed until Congress resolves that issue. This insertion did not stop the coming of legislation contrary to the clause.

In 1902 the federal government created the Tongass National Forest. It was composed of 16,015,900 acres, enveloping all of the Tlingit-Haida villages and lands, leaving them no land at all, except for the Klukwan Native Reserve and Annette Island, which had been set aside as a reserve for the Tsimshian Indians. Although the Tlingit-Haida Indians sued the federal government for their lost lands, they were only awarded $7,500,000. or approximatley 14 ¢ an acre.

The creation of the Tongass National Forest posed a great problem for the Tlingits and Haidas. Their lands had been rich with natural resources, mostly in timber, and they now have money with which to aid themselves. They are also participating in the Alaska Native Settlement Act but with no lands being returned to them.

National Wildlife Refuges have also been created by the federal government and many of these covering Native Lands making it impossible for the Native people to select from their lands. Although they have been able to hunt in these areas for subsistence, there will come a time when this will also come to a halt under the pressures of conservationists in the lower '48 states.

In the 1940's, the United States government created the 23,000,000 acre Naval Petroleum Reserve #4 on the Arctic Slope of Alaska. This reserve envelopes Barrow, Wainwright, Atkasook, and Nooiksut, the four main population centers of the North Slope. It is widely recognized, that the Arctic Slope Eskimos used all of the North Slope in their fight for survival, and still do. Where then are they going to acquire their lands which they are entitled to under the Land Claim Settlement Act? Furthermore, the state of Alaska now has title to the Prudhoe Bay Oil Fields within this region. Here again the Eskimos have the privilege of hunting for subsistence purposes, but for how long?

In the 1950's the federal government withdrew 8,959,000 acres from the Yukon Flats thinking of possibly building a hydroelectric dam. This withdrawal covers nine villages: Chalkyitsik, Fort Yukon, Circle, Birch Creek, Beaver, Stevens Village, Rampart, Venetie, and Arctic Village. Although it seems very unlikely in the near and distant future that anyone will see a dam at the Yukon Flats, the land has been withdrawn. The Indians of this area are again hampered in their land selections under the Claims Act, although like all Natives living on reserves, they have the right to hunt. This withdrawal for the Rampart Dam was done without the consent of the Athapascans living in the area, like all federal withdrawals.

Along with all these withdrawals are the National Defense reserves which come to a considerable amount of land, and again in areas where Native Alaskans live.

Governmental decisions inconsiderate of Native needs and views do not end with land withdrawals. Up to this time, major legislation concerning the Native people's welfare has always been done without their consultation and consent. If there were any protests aired by them, they were unheeded. A good example of this is the 1969 oil lease sale of Prudhoe Bay lands by the State of Alaska.

The State of Alaska leased thousands of acres of what the Arctic Slope Eskimos considered to be their lands. It made $900,000,000 through that lease. The Arctic Slope Eskimos were never consulted. It was a bold step on the part of the state, and they now have patent to that land.

It should be mentioned also that all governmental legislation is not against the Native people. The Indian Reorganization Act, enacted during Franklin Roosevelt's long reign as President, would have been beneficial to the Native people in Alaska. Through it, the Native people could have made reserves for themselves, and during a time when Alaska's resources were still not completely known. One of the reserves made at this time is the Chandalar Native Reserve. The Indians of Venetie received 2,408,000 acres for their reservations. Under the Alaska Native Settlement Act, they could keep it and not get a monetary settlement if they gave it up. But if they gave it up, they would end up with a considerably smaller area of land. It should be said too that if the Natives had gone and made reserves similar to the Venetie Indians, the outcome of the act might have been different, due to the amount of land they had in reserves.

Another beneficial governmental act on behalf of the Indians was the Indian Allotment Act. Through this act Indians and Eskimos could have received 160 acres of land each. They didn't. Had they acquired land in this fashion, the outcome of the act might again have been different.

Governmental actions then are not always beneficial to the Alaska Natives. This has been illustrated by the Tongass National Forest, Naval Petroleum Reserve #4, Rampart Dam Reserve, Prudhoe Bay and its lease, etc. For the most part, governmental actions have only created more problems which Natives have to face. Yet credit must be given to the government as well for its efforts to aid the Alaska Native.

There is a possible and sound answer to why governmental acts beneficial to the Alaskan Natives do not always succeed. The people just do not understand them, and in many cases do not even know of their existence. If they know of them, they do not know how to go about getting what they are supposed to get. That is why it is so important that the Native people in Alaska and outside of Alaska understand the Alaska Native Settlement Act.

Harold Napoleon
Director, Yupiktak Bista

Questions for Group Discussions

1. Do you agree with Mr. Napolean that children should have high schools very near home, rather than having to travel long distances to attend them? What are the arguments for and against (1) staying home to attend high school, (2) going away to a larger high school?

2. Mr. Napolean says that "The village student is behind when he gets into a school out of the BIA system of education." Do village schools run by other organizations prepare students better?

3. Mr. Napolean calls for "uniformity in education in Alaska." We assume he means uniformly good. Which system of education would you pick for all the schools in village Alaska? Why?

4. Do you agree with Mr. Napolean's statement that "villages will have to handle this problem [sanitation] by themselves"? What steps could your village take to improve sanitation?

5. What solution can you suggest for the lack of medical care in the villages?

6. How could more jobs be created in the villages? Who should create them, the people, the government, or both?

7. Are large families a problem?

8. Are the villages becoming less and less populated? Speak to some older people to find out how many people lived in your village 20, 30 or 40 years ago.

9. What are the reasons young men decide to live in larger towns? Why do the women not return to villages?

10. Mr. Napolean states that "village councils . . . do not really understand what their functions are. They are not aware of their powers." Do you agree?

11. If elderly village council members cannot read or write well in English, is it best to replace them with young people who can?

12. Has your village ever been badly flooded? Did the village receive state or federal disaster relief funds?

13. Is there any police service in your village?